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# Free Will, Reason, and Virtue : Spinoza's Ethics without Blame and Praise

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## Introduction

I am always puzzled when I read Spinoza's *Ethics*, because it seems to me that what the author is doing in that book implies a fundamental absurdity. What it is that I find to be fundamentally absurd in the *Ethics* will be explicated in the following sections, but I would say here that it has something to do with the fact that Spinoza cares about ethics despite denying the metaphysical version of free will. Is the existence of metaphysical freedom a necessary condition for our ethical way of living? This is the question that I aim to consider in this paper.

I will briefly explain how my consideration of this matter might be relevant to our contemporary interest. In the on-going philosophical controversy about free will, several authors have explored the possibility of an ethical life without metaphysical freedom (Honderich 1993, Smilansky 2000, Pereboom 2001, Waller 2011) because, thanks to an enormous growth in the free-will-skeptical discourse based on recent scientific discoveries (cf. social psychologist Daniel Wegner's well-known statement that conscious will is an illusion<sup>(1)</sup>), the need for a conception of ethics less dependent on the existence of free will is increasing. Nevertheless, any attempt at developing the idea of ethics without free will tends to be absurd, as we will see later. One of the most urgent matters in the philosophy of free will is thus, I suggest, to understand accurately why 'ethics without free will' might sound so absurd. My consideration of Spinoza's *Ethics* in this paper is meant to contribute to deepening our understanding of the difficulty in elaborating a conception of ethics devoid of metaphysical freedom.

One of my central suggestions in the following is that the idea of ethics without free will tends to be absurd because of our familiar, common-sense conceptual connection, which makes us think that the ethically right and wrong ways of life must be morally praised and condemned, respectively. This ethical truism, however, Spinoza intends to rebut. I will, therefore, propose to interpret Spinoza as a radical revisionist who attempts to criticize our ordinary form of thought. What he is doing in the *Ethics* is, I argue, not just recommending a right way of life, but rather bringing about a reformation in our way of thinking about ethical rightness.

This paper is divided into three sections. To begin with, I introduce the ethical view

developed in the *Ethics* as far as it is relevant to the purpose of this paper (Section 1). Next, I explain what I think of as fundamentally absurd in that view (Section 2). Finally, I suggest that the absurdity in question does not undermine the central purpose of Spinoza's ethical project, but rather epitomizes the difficulty of salvation from human bondage mentioned by the author himself in the last, well-known paragraph of the book in question.

## 1. What is 'the Right Way of Living' in the Ethics?

An unbound man is freer than a bound man, all other things being equal. This kind of freedom might be called 'relative', because a human being can be more or less free in this relative sense without having the absolute kind of freedom, that is, the power to choose one thing among several alternatives independently of any external force. What I would call 'metaphysical freedom' is of this absolute type. The libertarians in the free-will debate argue that we have this kind of freedom,<sup>(2)</sup> while Spinoza famously denies it. He suggests, for example, that

The mind [...] cannot be a free cause of its own actions, or cannot have an absolute faculty of willing and not willing. Rather, it must be determined to willing this or that (by IP28) by a cause which is also determined by another, and this cause again by another, and so on, q.e.d. (E2P48Dem)<sup>(3)</sup>

This denial of free will in the *Ethics* is a consequence of a typically Spinozistic thesis on the necessity of God's existence and essence, though I do not touch on the detail of the proof process because of its irrelevancy to my current interest. It is more important to understand that something absurd emerges when we associate Spinoza's denial of metaphysical freedom with the same philosopher's ethical consideration. This section, for this purpose of understanding, outlines his views on the ethically right way of life developed in the last two parts of the *Ethics*.

One of the shortcuts to grasping the point of what Spinoza calls 'the right way of living'<sup>(4)</sup> (E4Appendix) is to make a comparison between the titles of Parts 4 and 5 of the book in question.

Part 4. Of Human bondage, or the Powers of the Affects.

Part 5. Of the Power of the Intellect, or Human Freedom.

It is easy to find here two axes of contrast: human bondage versus human freedom, and

the power of the affects versus the power of the intellect. The two axes, in effect, coincide with each other in the sense that, in Spinoza's view, human bondage, which he calls 'slavery', is the status of being dominated by so-called 'affects' like hatred or lust caused by accidental external factors and human freedom, which is not the same as the free will above mentioned, is the status of acting in the guidance of one's own 'intellect' or reason. The basic dichotomy of Spinoza's view is thus, schematically, that living as a free person led by reason is ethically recommendable while living as a slave to one's emotions is not so(5).

However, what is meant by 'reason' here? How does reason liberate a human being from the domination of affects? We should answer these questions in order to discriminate the characteristically Spinozistic aspects of the view in question.

Spinoza's view on the right way of living is, according to his own understanding, partly similar to the Stoic and Cartesian view in that, for both views, the status of being tossed by the emotions or passions is an ethically inferior way for us to live (E5Preface). The philosopher of the *Ethics* argues, however, that there is a clear difference between his view and the Stoic-Cartesian view because they suggest, or at least tend to suggest, that human liberation from the tyranny of emotions is to be achieved in terms of the absolute power of will(6), whereas many of the propositions 'proved' in the *Ethics* radically deny the possibility of such overwhelming volitional control over the emotional forces. One of the fundamental grounds for Spinoza's denial of our having such power is a sort of human finitude, suggested in the following proposition:

The force by which a man perseveres in existing is limited, and infinitely surpassed by the power of external causes. (E4P3)

On the basis of this thesis, Spinoza argues that '[t]he force of any passion, or affect, can surpass the other actions, or power, of a man, so that the affect stubbornly clings to the man' (E4P6). The key point to be kept in mind is that, according to Spinoza's analysis, our affects, sometimes called 'passions', are literally passive psychological statuses brought about by various external causes outside of our body. As a result, some affects are hard for us to handle insofar as they have a persisting external cause that we lack the power to get rid of. This means that we humans have no invincible capacity to restrain or moderate our affects. We are, therefore, always at least partly slaves to our emotions, though not completely so, as we will see just below. Thus, in Spinoza's view, any volitional power cannot play a salvational role to free us from the misery of emotional bondage.

One of the characteristics of Spinoza's ethical view is therefore that, contrary to what he takes to be the Stoic-Cartesian view, he rejects the possibility of achieving human salvation from the passions by means of the will. Rather, he says, it is reason or intellect that liberates

us. Or, more exactly, the status of living 'according to the guidance of reason'<sup>(7)</sup> is in itself the status of being in freedom as the right way of living. I will explain next what role reason plays in Spinoza's ethical theory.

What does it mean to live 'according to the guidance of reason'? Reason is roughly characterized as an adequate understanding of things and their properties, given Spinozistic premises not explicated here<sup>(8)</sup>; that is, reason is not a general faculty of intelligence but rather a token cognition (E2P49CorDem). Anyway, what we should know is that Spinoza frequently equates the epistemic qualification 'adequate' with 'clear and distinct' and distinguishes it from the contrasting properties of 'confused' and 'mutilated', which are generally attributed to affects or passions. For example,

I say, first, that an affect, or passion of the mind, is a *confused idea*. For we have shown (E3P3) that the mind is acted on only insofar as it has inadequate, or confused ideas. (E3 General Definition of the Affects, Exp., the italic is in the original text)

Note that instead of separating the emotional aspect from the cognitive one inside the human mind, Spinoza here characterizes the affects by their cognitive inadequacy or confusedness. Though I do not investigate this cognitivist analysis of emotion in detail, I want to point out that we can extend Spinoza's basic dichotomy mentioned above. There is, on the one hand, a series of action–power–reason, as adequate cognition and human freedom, and, on the other hand, a series of passion–impotence–confused and mutilated idea, as inadequate cognition and human bondage. Spinoza suggests, on the basis of this dichotomy, that understanding in terms of reason plays the role of 'remedies for the affects' (E5Preface). 'The more', he says, 'an affect is known to us, then, the more it is in our power, and the less the mind is acted on by it' (E5P3Cor).

We now need some examples. Suppose that you hate a doctor for her rude attitude. If you come to learn that her rudeness is caused by the stress of her parents' sudden death, your hatred for her will be moderated because, in that case, you will understand that it is not the doctor herself but the unlucky event that is essentially responsible for her rude attitude. The same thing happens in the case of love. Suppose that you fall in love with a kind person and your mind violently vacillates between this new person and your partner. However, if you realize, accidentally or not, that this person's kindness is faked for the sake of MI5's secret mission to gather information about you, then your love and vacillations of mind will disappear in no time. Spinoza generally suggests that

If we separate emotions, or affects, from the thought of an external cause, and join them to other thoughts, then the love, or hate, toward the external cause is destroyed, as are the

vacillations of mind arising from these affects. (E5P2)

In brief, the effort of reason deepens our understanding of further causes of affects and thereby enables us to moderate or even remove our emotional disturbance.

The 'right way of living' that Spinoza proposes takes this idea of rational therapy of the emotions for its key tone. I would like to mention two passages the philosopher wrote concerning how we should and should not live.

[...] it should be noted that sickness of mind and misfortunes take their origin especially from too much love toward a thing which is liable to many variations and which we can never fully possess. (E5P20Schol)

But human power is very limited and infinitely surpassed by the power of external causes. [...] Nevertheless, we shall bear calmly those things which happen to us contrary to what the principle of our advantage demands, if we are conscious that we have done our duty, that the power we have could not have extended itself to the point where we could have avoided those things, and that we are a part of the whole of Nature, whose order we follow. (E4AppendixXXXII)

These passages jointly suggest that, while the strong affects caused by transient external factors might catch us in human misfortunes or miseries, our understanding in terms of reason will liberate us from such an affective captivity to ensure that we will be rationally satisfied with our doing what we should do. In this sense, Spinoza suggests that a free person strives 'as far as he can, to act well and rejoice' (E4P73Schol). In other words, he would not repent what he has done (E4P54), nor would he be indignant about anything (E4P51Schol), nor caught by any great pride or despondency (E4P56). Rather, he would live with joy insofar as it is good (E4P59Dem). He would live with favour to others (E4P51) and live with effort 'to repay the other's hate, anger, and disdain toward him, with love, or nobility' (E4P46). This is 'to live under the guidance of reason', and it is what Spinoza calls 'the right way of living'.

## 2. Absurdity in the Ethics without Free Will

I am always puzzled when I try to understand what Spinoza is doing in developing his ethical view, as I said at the beginning of this paper. My long-term puzzlement roughly takes the following form.

According to Spinoza, as we saw in the last section, living under the guidance of reason is

the right way to live, while being tossed by affects is not. If this is correct, we should *blame* a person who is a slave of their affects, since any person who lives in an ethically wrong way will be doing something blameworthy (this point is to be explicated in detail). However, in Spinoza's framework, we cannot justly blame that person. After all, could that person have avoided being obsessed by their affects? We should answer this question negatively, because in the Spinozistic world there is no freedom of will in terms of which that person could have avoided being tossed by their affects. A person under the guidance of reason, after all, is necessarily so and a person tossed by affects is also necessarily so, given Spinoza's radical denial of metaphysical freedom. They are thus not morally responsible for their own way of living. What Spinoza suggests implies, therefore, that we cannot justly blame any person who is tossed by affects, despite the qualification that her or his way of living is not morally right. (The same thing happens with regards to praise, though I mainly focus on blame in the following.)

This, I will argue, is absurd. Certainly, in the contemporary debate on free will and determinism, several authors led by a special interest<sup>(9)</sup> suppose that the existence of metaphysical freedom is not a necessary condition for blame (e.g. Frankfurt 1969, Fischer 2002). However, I suggest that we might best understand what Spinoza is doing in the *Ethics* if we reflect on our own way of thinking and thereby find that the notions of 'free will', 'blame', and 'moral rightness' are mutually linked in our ordinary conceptual connection. In this section, I explain what I think of as a fundamental absurdity in Spinoza's ethical view through a reflection on our own familiar conceptual framework.

I use the term 'absurd' in the way that Thomas Nagel brilliantly explains it.

In ordinary life a situation is absurd when it includes a conspicuous discrepancy between pretention or aspiration and reality: someone gives a complicated speech in support of a motion that has already been passed; a notorious criminal is made president of a major philanthropic foundation; you declare your love over the telephone to a recorded announcement; as you are being knighted, your pants fall down. (Nagel 1971: 13)

A reform, for example, is called 'absurd' when it deteriorates the conditions, because the reform's intention of amelioration does not meet the reality of deterioration. An inconsistency between intention and reality is thus a sign of absurdity.

Is there, then, something discrepant in what Spinoza is doing in the *Ethics*? My answer is affirmative. The philosopher, on the one hand, qualifies a certain mode of life as the 'right way of living' (*recta vivendi ratio*, in Latin) and, on the other hand, denies the existence of the free will that is a necessary basis for moral responsibility and justification of blame. Isn't it the case that the act of evaluating something as right would entail condemning a person who does

something far from, or quite contrary to, that thing? If, for example, you say to your neighbour, who is possessed by greed for money, 'Listening to the voice of reason but not of affect is indeed the right way of living', then isn't your statement intended to condemn your neighbour for her or his wrong lifestyle? I argue that, in our ordinary usage of terms, any sentence of the form 'Bombing citizens is not right', 'Smoking next to a child is not right', 'Beating a rice bowl with chopsticks like a drum is not right', and so on carries with it the connotation of condemnation in most contexts. I thus suggest that making use of the term 'right' in the moral sense contains commitment to the practice of praise and blame, while justification of this practice requires the existence of free will. There is, therefore, a discrepancy between Spinoza's denial of metaphysical freedom and his use of the term 'right' in the moral sense.

As a result, I find it very hard to identify what it is that Spinoza is doing when he suggests that some way of life is not morally right. It cannot be blame, because the philosopher does not have a necessary basis for the justification of blame. Is it, then, mere description of what is morally right and what is not?(10) Does Spinoza, having a quietist expression on his face, merely say that the right thing is so-and-so and the wrong is such-and-such, without any intention of praising and blaming? This interpretation, I suggest, would make Spinoza's *Ethics* unattractive, because it would deprive its ethical theory of any intention to change the readers' ethical lives.

What I should note here is that moral qualification in terms of the word 'right' is remarkably different from the typical kind of aesthetic evaluation in terms of 'beautiful', 'nice', and so on(11). Let us compare, for example, the statement 'Fred's statue is not beautiful' with 'Fred's standpoint is not right'. The former, in many contexts, may lack any pragmatic force of blame, while the latter essentially tends to condemn Fred for his wrong standpoint on something. This suggests that calling something 'not right' in a moral context is not only a negative evaluation analogous to a bad score in a sculpture competition, but also the effective performance of blaming someone. A typical expression of blame is, indeed, 'You are not right' or more directly 'You're wrong'.(12) The term 'ethical rightness' is thus tightly connected to the practice of blame (and praise) in our ordinary usage of terms.

I thus suggest that our natural conceptual framework evokes an absurdity in Spinoza's evaluation of a certain way of life as '*recta*', insofar as an ethical blame implied by the usage of the term requires free will as its justification. The same concern applies to the contemporary authors who propose an ethics without freedom. Ted Honderich, for example, who is one of the eminent free-will-sceptical philosophers, denies the existence of free will required for just blame while asking what kind of attitude we should take towards the angst of desperation brought on by non-existence of freedom. He suggests, for instance, that an attitude of 'intransigence', that is, an attitude of pretending that the lack of freedom makes no difference to our hope in life, is 'unsatisfactory' (Honderich 1993/2004: 123) because there are several



hopes that we should give up if determinism is true, such as the hope of being the ultimate creator of one's own life. What we should note here, among other things, is that Honderich qualifies a certain kind of attitude as 'unsatisfactory' despite his denial of free will, which would be a necessary basis for justified blame. Does Honderich then purely describe such-and-such as 'unsatisfactory' without any intention of reproaching those persons who live in such a way? If so, his judgement of human attitudes in an ethical context would be assimilated into an aesthetic evaluation typically exemplified by 'That attaché case is beautiful'. This is, I suggest again, an interpretation that would make Honderich's theory unattractive.

I would suggest, then, that deepening our understanding of the absurdity in question in the *Ethics* will contribute to our contemporary exploration of an ethics without free will. The most important link in my chain of explanation of the absurdity is, I stress, the suggestion that calling something 'not right' in a moral context connotes blame or reproach in the ordinary, familiar conceptual framework. Insofar as we keep such a conceptual connection, therefore, we cannot but find a connotation of condemnation in Spinoza's statement that being tossed by one's affects is not the right way to live. This is why we, or at least I, find something absurd about Spinoza regarding a certain way of life as 'not right' while denying our capacity metaphysically for free will. Any person who reads the *Ethics* will reasonably ask, 'What is Spinoza doing, if not blaming, when he says that being tossed by affects is not right?' This is the question that always leaves me puzzled when I read the book in question.

Someone might answer this by saying, 'That philosopher is purely describing what is not right, and has no intention of blaming anyone, because he himself suggests that a person who does a wrong thing necessarily does so, and therefore there is no possibility for that person to have done otherwise'. A disadvantage of this 'quietist' interpretation consists in giving Spinoza's philosophy an aspect of resignation to fate and thereby making it essentially unattractive. We need another way of understanding it.

### 3. Ethics without Praise and Blame

I suggest that what Spinoza is doing in the *Ethics* is fundamentally absurd because it is difficult, or even impossible, to separate ourselves from our familiar conceptual connection that links ethical rightness with praise and blame. It is, however, just this conceptual framework that Spinoza challenges in his book, or so I argue in this section. One of my proposals developed in the following is that what the historically prominent radical denier of free will is doing in his book might best be understood if we interpret him as defying our common-sense framework of moral thought and thereby cutting off the conceptual line from ethical rightness to praise and blame. Spinoza is, in this sense, a revisionist of our way of

moral thinking. My conclusion will be that, even though what Spinoza is doing in the *Ethics* sounds fundamentally absurd, it is an effect or *side-effect* of his attempt to reform our ordinary form of thought. The absurdity in question, therefore, does not undermine the central purpose of Spinoza's ethical project but rather epitomizes the difficulty of salvation from human bondage mentioned in the last, well-known paragraph of the *Ethics* (E5P42Schol).

The fact that Spinoza himself finds something wrong, and therefore to be corrected, in our ordinary moral framework is confirmed by what he says about praise and blame. He suggests, for example, that 'because they [*i.e.* human beings] think themselves free, those notions have arisen: *praise* and *blame*, *sin* and *merit*' (13). This statement would mean, given Spinoza's denial of free will, that our ordinary moral practice has a wrong basis. Such critical scrutiny of praise and blame, which I consider in the following, is one of the highlights of the *Ethics* that might deepen our self-understanding of our own moral conduct.

We often praise or blame a person for her or his doing a certain thing in everyday life. Spinoza characterizes such moral conduct in terms of its affective or emotional aspects.

[...] *the joy with which we imagine the action of another by which he has striven to please us I call praise*. On the other hand, *the sadness with which we are averse to his action I call blame*. (E3P29Schol, the italics are Curley's.)

I do not consider in this paper if the emotional features quoted here would exhaustively specify the *definienda* in question, that is, praise and blame, though I would note that the moral acts of praise and blame are, according to the philosopher, often practiced in the space of ambition, as it were. That is to say, it is an ambitious person, in reality, who cares so much about reputation or esteem in an interpersonal relationship. This would typically hold true for most politicians, though I would suggest it applies more or less to almost everyone. Spinoza defines ambition by analyzing it in the following way:

*This striving to do something (and also to omit doing something) solely to please men is called ambition*, especially when we strive so eagerly to please the people that we do or omit certain things to our own injury, or another's. (E3P29Schol, the italics are Curley's)

The last half part of this quotation suggests that ambition sometimes leads a person into commitment to harm. Spinoza says here and elsewhere that an 'ambitious man' who thinks of nothing but esteem is 'usually troublesome' (E4P44Schol). As a result, he supposes ambition to be something we should not be obsessed by.

It is very hard not to be obsessed by ambition, however, as we know from our own experience. Spinoza explains this fact in terms of 'self-esteem', which is 'a joy born of the fact

that a man considers himself and his own power of acting' (Def. Aff. XXVI). This kind of joy is, according to Spinoza, 'the highest thing we can hope for'. In other words, everyone strives to live a life ultimately for the sake of nothing but self-esteem. Now, Spinoza says,

because this self-esteem is more and more encouraged and strengthened by praise (by E3P53Cor), and on the other hand, more and more upset by blame (by E3P55Cor), we are guided most by *love of esteem* [...] (E4P52Schol)

A human being, in brief, almost inevitably cares about praise and blame, insofar as she or he is obsessed by self-esteem as the highest joy she or he can hope for.

Spinoza is thus very conscious of how difficult it is for us to quit the game of praise and blame. He suggests at the same time, however, that it is not impossible to keep oneself away from the space of ambition where one cares about praise and blame. If a person, he argues, lives under the guidance of reason, then she acts 'absolutely from virtue' (E5P24) and thereby stops caring about any result of her action as 'additional' reward and punishment, that is, praise and blame. What this means can be explained as follows.

Ordinarily, we live a moral life with an interest in the rewards and punishments (in a broad sense) of our actions. These interests would form our ordinary conception of moral activity, under which we regard each other as free and responsible agents, and praise or blame each other for our actions. A characteristic of this conception is, I suggest, that not only an action in itself but also the reward or punishment arising from it matters morally under such a conception. I repeat that we almost inevitably live with this kind of moral conception. I cannot stop caring about, say, my reputation for my educational activities, or the possible blame for being late in submitting this paper to Takefumi. Anyone, in ordinary contexts, cares about how others judge his or her actions. This way of life, however, sometimes results in ambition with harm to others or even to oneself, as mentioned above. What Spinoza attempts to do in the *Ethics* is, as I would interpret it, to de-construct these familiar ideas of moral activity and to elaborate a new kind of conception under which praise and blame no longer matter.

Spinoza elaborates such a conception on the basis of his understanding of 'virtue'. 'We ought', he says, 'to want virtue for its own sake, and that there is not anything preferable to it, more useful to us, for the sake of which we ought to want it' (E4P18Schol). Virtue is, in other words, intrinsically valuable. Being virtuous, therefore, is in itself a valuable state without any additional reward. What is more, it is still a valuable state even if punishment follows. The famous thesis 'Blessedness is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself' (E5P42) can be understood in this line of conception. Spinoza, in effect, identifies the virtuous way of life with living under the guidance of reason (E4P24). A person led by reason, therefore, would not care about any reward for being virtuous. To apply my expression, she lives a moral life with the

conception under which reward and punishment would never matter.

This interpretation would enable us to understand in a systematic way how Spinoza's denial of free will could be consistent with his evaluation of some way of life as 'right' in a moral sense. Under the conception that Spinoza aims to elaborate, there would no longer arise the question of 'Doesn't Spinoza blame a person who is tossed by their affects when he says that their way of life is not right?' For, under the conception in question, we do not have to care about blame in our moral activity. Instead, says Spinoza, we should just 'act well and rejoice', as seen above. The fact that Spinoza has no basis for justifying moral blame does not, therefore, mean treating him as a quietist since, I would suggest, he demands that we live in the right way, not by mentioning any reward or punishment for an action or omission, but by referring to the intrinsic value in the virtuous life in itself. When Spinoza says that being tossed by affects is not right, he is not talking about blame or condemnation but just about 'acting well'.

If we embrace the Spinozistic conception of ethics without praise and blame, then, the absurdity I always find in the *Ethics* vanishes. This means that what Spinoza is doing in the *Ethics* carries with it no internal, irremovable contradiction. We can thus see a possible form of 'ethics without free will' in Spinoza's *Ethics*, the possibility of which some recent writers are eagerly exploring. One of the key points is, I suppose, that virtue as a sort of intrinsic value would prevent Spinoza from being corrupted into a moral quietist despite his undermining of the necessary basis for moral blame<sup>(14)</sup>. I suggest, therefore, that a significantly moral life would, *in principle*, be possible without metaphysical freedom.

I should say, however, that it is very difficult for us to embrace the Spinozistic conception of ethics because, on reflection, we find that our caring about praise and blame probably belongs to our 'natural human commitment to ordinary interpersonal attitudes', which is 'part of the general framework of human life', as Strawson says (Strawson 1962: 83). In fact, I always find myself caring about praise and blame in a moral context. Probably like many of us, I continue to find something absurd in the concept of an 'ethics without praise and blame'. Few people could live a life devoid of praise and blame. I conclude this paper by suggesting that Spinoza himself realized this. He writes, at the end of the *Ethics*, the following:

If the way I have shown to lead to these things now seems very hard, still it can be found. And, of course, what is found so rarely must be hard. For if salvation were at hand, and could be found without great effort, how could nearly everyone neglect it? But all things excellent are as difficult as they are rare. (E5P42Schol)

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- (1) See Wegner 2002.
- (2) Even the conditional-analyst type of compatibilists, according to one interpretation, attempt to save this kind of freedom, since it can be said that they argue for the possibility of truth of the 'absolute' sentence '*A* could have done otherwise' on the basis of the analysis of it into the 'conditional' sentence '*A* would have done otherwise, if she had chosen otherwise'. The Frankfurt-type compatibilists have no need to argue for this kind of freedom, however.
- (3) All quotations from the *Ethics* in the following are from Spinoza (1994), edited and translated by Edwin Curley, which some scholars have praised as a 'masterful English translation' (Cramer 1999: 25).

- (4) The original Latin is 'recta vivendi ratio'.
- (5) Pierre Macherey suggests that the titles in question describe the 'global project of an ethical consideration' which starts from human slavery as emotional domination to reach human freedom as action in the guidance of reason (Macherey 1994: 29).
- (6) Spinoza cites, for example, a passage in Section 50 of the first part of Descartes' *Passions of the Soul* titled 'Any soul, however weak, can if well-directed acquire absolute power over its passions', and criticizes it (E5Preface).
- (7) This is a phrase frequently used in Parts 4 and 5 of the *Ethics* (the original Latin expression is 'ex ductu rationis vivere'; see, e.g. E4P35).
- (8) Mainly for avoiding unnecessary complexity.
- (9) *I.e.*, the interest to argue for compatibility of determinism and our moral responsibility.
- (10) John Russell says, 'At best, then, Spinoza is left with a descriptive ethics, wherein we observe, analyze, and describe the moral conduct of agents' (Russell 1984: 385). I oppose this view in this paper.
- (11) Cf. Smart 1961, where 'praise and dispraise', which are aesthetic evaluations like grading apples, are distinguished from 'praise and blame', which require an agent's moral responsibility. Smart says, 'to praise (in this sense) or to blame a person for an action is not only to grade it (morally) but to imply that it is something for which the person is responsible' (Smart 1961: 70).
- (12) This statement is typically blame. Saying, for example, 'You're wrong. But I just say it. I don't mean to blame you', would not completely cancel the pragmatic force of blame of the statement in question.
- (13) E1Appendix, the italics are from the original text.
- (14) Cf. Slote's suggestion that so-called virtue ethics are compatible with determinism, while this doctrine possibly undermines the basis for praiseworthiness and blameworthiness (Slote 1990).